Central Emergency Response Fund Guidelines

CERF Funding for Emergency Information and Communications Technology Equipment and Services

A. PURPOSE

These guidelines clarify definitions and outline emergency Information and Communications Technology (ICT)[1] equipment and services that fall within the scope of the Rapid Response and Underfunded Emergency windows of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

CERF is a stand-by fund established by the United Nations to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters and complex emergencies. The CERF was approved by consensus by the United Nations General Assembly on 15 December 2005 to achieve the following objectives:

➢ Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life;
➢ Enhance response to time-critical requirements; and
➢ Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

ICTs are essential for enabling humanitarian agencies to reach beneficiaries and effectively deliver assistance especially in the first days of an emergency. Security and staff safety is a consideration and can prompt the need for common emergency ICT equipment and services. Common emergency ICT services serve as a backbone for UN agencies and cluster partners to facilitate common security support measures[2].

All emergency ICT equipment and services serve the wider humanitarian community and in this spirit are also expected to be funded through a wider funding base.

Concern has been expressed by a number of stakeholders, including members of the CERF Advisory Group and donors, regarding the use of the CERF to provide funds for common services, including ICT activities, which should be funded by the regular budget of each agency for administrative support. The

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[1] Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become the generally accepted term to describe the converged worlds of IT and communications. ICT more accurately describes the emergency telecommunications solutions used in emergencies.

[2] The common network does **not** replace the responsibility of each individual UN agency to meet its MOSS compliance requirements. Source: "Emergency Telecommunications Cluster – Description of Services".

main issues of concern include the following: a) recurrent costs; b) budget lines for staff, training, and equipment; c) in-country security levels that do not correspond with the scope of the project; and d) coordination and complementarities with other in-country telecommunication activities.

In this regard, these guidelines serve to define the scope and criteria for CERF funding allocations to emergency ICT equipment and services and aim to ensure consistency and transparency regarding the funding of these activities. These guidelines replace the 'Guidelines for the submission of CERF requests for Emergency Telecommunications Equipment and Services' approved in April 2008.

These guidelines are intended for use by the Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RCs/HCs) and the respective country teams at the field level, as well as the UN and its funds, programmes, and specialized agencies and IOM at the headquarters level to guide the prioritization, formulation and selection of CERF grant requests.

Adherence to these guidelines will be monitored by the ERC, as Fund Manager, with support from the CERF Secretariat. It is imperative that the guidelines are complied with in order to ensure a timely, effective and transparent process for accessing funding from the CERF. Each grantee is also required to comply with the terms of the grant agreement as established in the *Secretary-General's Bulletin on the Establishment and Operation of the CERF*, and the Letter of Understanding (LoU), including project monitoring and reporting requirements.

B.   TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Disaster[3] is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human suffering, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Disasters can be caused by a variety of factors including natural hazards or be induced by human processes.

Complex emergencies are characterized by extensive violence and loss of life, massive displacement of people, widespread damage to social and economic assets, and multi-faceted humanitarian responses. Additionally, complex emergencies are also characterized as an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency. (IASC December 1994).

Life-saving and/or core emergency humanitarian programmes are those *actions* that, within a short time span, remedy, mitigate or avert direct loss of life, physical harm or threats to a population or major portion thereof. Also permissible are common humanitarian services that are necessary to enable life-saving activities.

Time-critical response refers to necessary, rapid and time-limited actions required to minimize additional loss of lives and damage to social and economic assets. It relates to the opportunities for the rapid injection of resources to save lives either in complex emergencies or after natural disasters.

C.   GUIDELINES

Respecting the mandate of the CERF, the proposed critical ICT activities should serve to support the response of the humanitarian system to life-saving or core humanitarian activities. Emergency ICT projects will only be considered under the rapid response window – they are not generally eligible for consideration through the underfunded window.

The CERF request must include a detailed project plan based on an initial emergency ICT assessment and identified gaps. The request must clearly indicate how the CERF funds relate to the overall project funding and timeline. Any equipment or services provided/donated by partners or the private sector must be mentioned indicating the value and service description.

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[3] UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009).

Rapid response grants should address the need to deliver life-saving assistance in a timely manner and should assist humanitarian organizations to quickly access areas and safely deliver life-saving assistance to beneficiaries. In particular, CERF Rapid Response funds can be made available for emergency ICT equipment and services under the following circumstances:

1. The set-up of new core ICT networks for new emergency operations (the onset of a natural disaster, a severe outbreak of disease or new complex emergencies). This will include parts of the start-up costs and service for the first phases of the operations. It will be a timely intervention and should serve as a springboard for other donors to come on board.

2. Upgrade of existing equipment and/or services will be based on a review of the deterioration in the humanitarian situation coupled with a change in the security environment, supported through consultations with UNDSS.

As a general rule, CERF will fund emergency ICT equipment and/or services on the basis of a security risk assessment.

Activities should be harmonized among partners of the humanitarian community to ensure effective communications and avoid duplication of systems in order to maximize efficiency. This may include introducing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for vehicle tracking, for staff safety and security, and for activities to ensure the implementation of a security ICT network.

Before submission to the RC/HC, applications for funding should be cleared by the local Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) or in its absence by the local inter-agency ICT or Emergency Telecommunications Group. As a matter of practice, prior to submission to the CERF, applications should be shared with the World Food Programme (WFP), Global ETC Leader.

For agencies that have signed the umbrella letter of understanding (LoU), CERF funds for emergency ICT projects must be committed within six months following disbursement from CERF.[4]

Considerations for CERF submissions and specific explanation for narrative and budget lines

Beneficiary of the service: Provision of emergency ICT services shall benefit national and international UN and NGO staff present in the operational areas and shall be explicitly indicated in all proposals.

Sustainability: The proposing agency should ensure that the project is sustainable. The overall management and operational/recurrent costs of the deployed infrastructure and personnel should be described in the project. The activities should be financially sustainable beyond the contribution from the CERF with all participating agencies agreeing to cost-sharing in the future. CERF will not fund regular maintenance of equipment.

Cost-sharing among agencies: Proposed projects should include a description of existing in-country telecommunications capacity including local infrastructure and confirm that additional common services are required by partners in common operational areas as approved by the HCT/UNCT. Proposing agencies are expected and requested to look for alternate source(s) of funds.

Type of equipment: Only core ICT equipment needed for the common network infrastructure will be funded. Other equipment will need to be funded by other donors or by the agency itself.

Staff costs: CERF will not fund individual agency staff needs. Staff costs can only be considered for the first three months of intervention in an ongoing emergency (to give agencies enough time to work out a suitable cost-sharing mechanism for sustainability), or a new sudden onset disaster. The CERF acknowledges that the cost of specialized technical experts is part of the service delivery cost and a critical part to allow the implementation of the project. However, relevant agencies need to ensure that the cost-sharing mechanism is initiated as soon as possible to ensure sustainability of operations.

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[4] For agencies that have not signed the umbrella LoU, the implementation timeline for rapid response grants is three months.

CERF does not cover technical experts and consultants at the regional or headquarters levels. Standard procedure charges by agencies (e.g. fixed percentage for services for equipment, freight, and staff) need to be justified for each application and reduced to a minimum.

Training: Agencies are encouraged to minimize training costs as much as possible by pooling local resources and standardizing training material and methodologies including online delivery of standard training modules.

Initial ICT assessments: As per other sectors, the CERF will not fund initial assessments for provision of ICT services. Consideration will only be given to exceptions for inter-agency assessments including initial ICT requirements on a case by case basis.

For CAP/Flash Appeal countries: All projects submitted to CERF must be included in the CAP or Flash Appeal, respectively, under the appealing agency.

Humanitarian Principles

CERF supported interventions are to be consistent with basic humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. In addition, agencies implementing CERF funded projects, as part of the United Nations and of the larger humanitarian community, should take into consideration:

Vulnerability of particular groups: Children and women represent the largest group of individuals affected by emergencies. Particular concern should be paid to the situation of girls and women in all emergency situations. The CERF emphasizes the importance of ensuring that principles provided in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, together with the CRC's Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (adopted in 2000), and other related resolutions such as Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in October 2000, be pillars to the implementation of CERF funded programmes and projects. In all sectors of response, agencies would ensure the application of gender equity principles and promote the empowerment and protection of women and girls.

Environment: Given the increasing fragility on the natural environment and the irreversible deterioration of soil and water quality, agencies are requested to ensure a maximum consideration for the use of funds to advert negative impact on the environment.

Partnerships: UN agencies and humanitarian actors at large are at the heart of planning, prioritization and decision making in regards to the CERF. They are encouraged to maximize the interaction and collaboration with governments and national and international non-governmental organizations in order to effectively respond to emergencies and to ensure that the basic principles and priorities of the CERF are followed and effectively applied.

Empowerment of affected populations: Focusing on the immediate aftermath of emergencies, the CERF expects agencies implementing programs and projects to make direct efforts to contribute to the durability of solutions and the improvement of livelihoods of the most affected population, with special consideration to gender and minority groups.
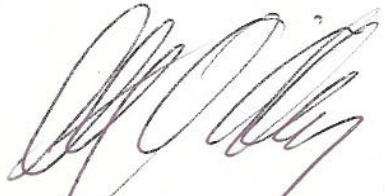
Supports the Principles of "Good Humanitarian Donorship" and "Do No Harm": Agencies will make all efforts to ensure that assistance funded by the CERF empowers local communities and promotes self-sufficiency; conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of impact; avoid contributing to conflict and inequity; contribute to recovery and sustainable interventions; and ensure effective participation of civil society and local governments.

D.   REFERENCES

Normative or Superior References
- CERF Life-Saving Criteria

SIGNED:

Steve O'Malley
Chief
Central Emergency Response Fund

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